

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) A supporting device for supporting insertion of a medical instrument into a human body, comprising:

a tubular member having an inner passageway between its opposite ends through which the medical instrument is capable of passing; and

a reinforcement member formed by a thin plate extending along a perimeter of the inner passageway,

wherein the tubular member and the reinforcement element have curved shapes conformable to the shape of a pharynx of a human body and, when inserted from an oral cavity into the pharynx and retained there, guide the medical instrument to a digestive organ through the inner passageway.

2. (Original) A supporting device for supporting insertion of a medical instrument into a human body, comprising:

a tubular member having an inner passageway between its opposite ends through which the medical instrument is capable of passing;

a reinforcement member extending along a perimeter of the inner passageway; and

a guiding member having a diameter smaller than the inner passageway and insertable from an oral cavity of a human body into a pharynx, the guiding member guiding, when inserted into the pharynx, the tubular member and the reinforcement member from the oral cavity to the pharynx,

wherein, when guided to the pharynx and retained there, the tubular member and the reinforcement member guide the medical instrument to a digestive organ through the inner passageway.

3. (Original) The supporting device of claim 1, further comprising a guiding member having a diameter smaller than the inner passageway of the tubular member and insertable from the oral cavity into the pharynx wherein, when inserted into the pharynx, the guiding member guides the tubular member and the reinforcement member from the oral cavity to the pharynx.

4. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 1 ~~to~~ 3, wherein the reinforcement member has the shape of a spiral continuously extending in a center line direction of the inner passageway.

5. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 1 ~~to~~ 4, wherein a digestive organ end of the tubular member extends toward a digestive organ ahead of a digestive organ end of the reinforcement member.

6. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 1 ~~to~~ 5, wherein the digestive organ end of the tubular member is slanted with respect to the center line of the inner passageway.

7. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 1 ~~to~~ 6, wherein the tubular member is molded with the reinforcement member buried therein.

8. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 2 ~~to~~ 7, wherein:

the guiding member includes a guiding member engagement section; and

the tubular member includes a tubular member engagement section for engaging with the guiding member engagement section of the guiding member

inserted up to a predetermined position in the inner passageway of the tubular member.

9. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 2 to 7, wherein:

the guiding member has a guiding member alignment mark; and

the tubular member has a tubular member alignment mark aligned with the guiding member alignment mark of the guiding member inserted to a predetermined position in the inner passageway of the tubular member.

10. (Currently Amended) The supporting device of ~~any one of~~ claims 1 to 9, wherein:

the tubular member is made of a resin material; and

the guiding member is made of another resin material harder than the resin material of the tubular member.